

# IN·THE·POE·CIRCLE

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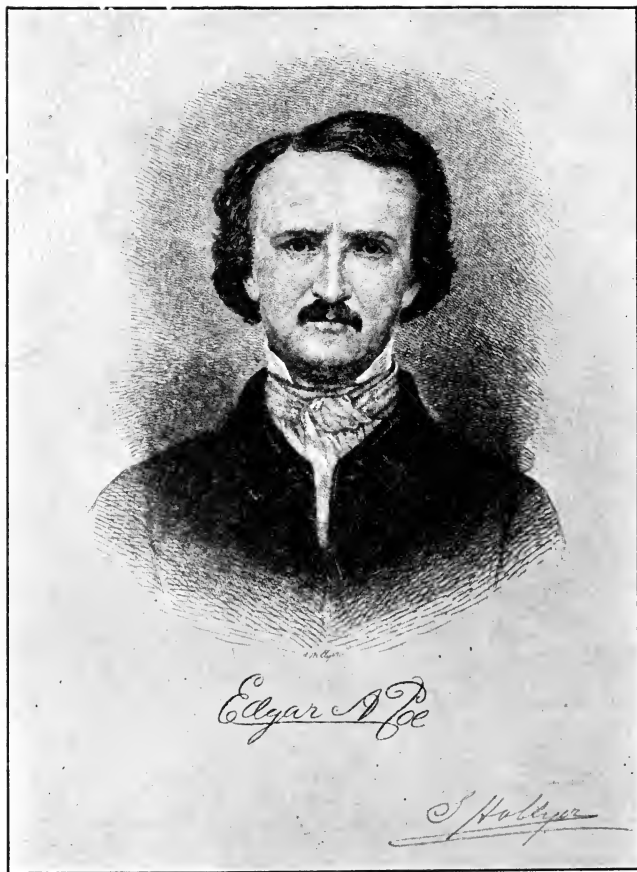


# IN THE POE CIRCLE









FROM AN ETCHING BY S. HOLLYER

# In The Poe Circle

With Some Account of the Poe-  
Chivers Controversy, and other  
Poe Memorabilia

BY  
JOEL BENTON

Author of "Emerson as a Poet"



THE  
PUBLISHERS  
OF THE  
NEW YORK

M. F. MANSFIELD & A. WESSELS  
NEW YORK

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NEW YORK

GENERAL

TO VIMU  
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## Dedication

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### To My Father

Whose Patient Fortitude  
under Extreme and Life-  
long Trials, and whose  
Generous Nature I have  
Never Known Surpassed.



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## Prefatory Note

The interest which the serial publication of the articles here collected has evoked, through a wide-spread constituency, has prompted me to gather them together in this way. It only remains to be said that they appeared, two of them, in *Collier's Weekly*; two in *The Forum*; one in *Munsey's*; and one in *Truth*.

It is hoped the illustrative and subsidiary features presented, not less than the temper of the discussion, may have something to offer to those who care for Poe.

JOEL BENTON

Poughkeepsie, N. Y.

August 1, 1899





This is a reproduction  
of the only shingle  
remaining from the  
original roof which  
covered the cottage  
at Fordham while  
Poe lived there.

J. B.

This shingle came from  
the roof of the cottage  
at Fordham, N.Y.  
where Poe lived  
by Henry Raymond  
Jan 6 1870

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## ON A SHINGLE.

*Taken from the Edgar Allan Poe Cottage at Fordham*

---

Beneath this bit of darkened pine,  
Genius and grief once dwelt together;  
Bard of "The Raven's" haunting line,  
Shingle and bard in bitterest weather.

But then the cold world had not heard  
Of that immitigable sorrow;  
And human hearts it only stirred  
When dawned the too late, far to-morrow.

If it should speak, it's parent tree's  
Sad chords—when winds its boughs were swaying—  
Would fail to voice the tragedies  
All words are powerless for portraying.

Joel Benton.



## The Precursor of Poe.

THERE is no literary reputation in America, and few literary names of the last half-century, that evoke the curious, haunting memory which belongs to Poe. A new and well-authenticated poem bearing his name, which Mr. R. H. Stoddard says he believes it will never be possible at this date to find, would make a tremendous literary event. The discovery of a new Shakespearian play might be more interesting to more people; but in America, and in France, where Poe's influence has distinctly touched two groups of authors belonging to two generations, a genuine Poe discovery would, with large numbers, take precedence.

One may state the fact without being able

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to give it critical justification. In fact, the critic of Poe as a poet cannot reasonably account for him and his fame. A great deal of the verse that he wrote, if it was presented to-day for the first time, would attract little attention. If you subtract from his body of poetry—which is not a large quantity taken altogether—"The Raven," "Annabel Lee," and possibly one or two more of the poems, in which list "The Bells," for its *bizarreness*, might be included, what, really, would there be left to found this singular and unchallenged fame upon?

But no such treatment would be detrimental to Bryant, Longfellow, Emerson, or Lowell; and Holmes and Whittier could bear it equally well without essential loss of distinction. What was it, then, that Poe contributed to literature which so tingles the nerves and stirs up pulsations of delight? It is certainly nothing that he offers in the domain of thought. He settles no real problems, nor discusses them even, nor



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peers into them. In one or two passages in Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," and on almost any page of Tennyson's "In Memoriam," can be found more criticism of life, which is what Matthew Arnold calls the function of poetry, than there is in all the poems Poe ever wrote. No great poet that we know drifted so far away from Arnold's ideal as Poe did; while some of our minor poets fulfil it to a very high degree.

Certainly somewhere and somehow he had and gave charm; and Arnold said also:

"Charm is the glory which makes  
Song of the poet divine."

This charm, too, may have been heightened, or made piquant, by his romantic and desolate career. Such a career, marking nearly a whole life, and ending it with a sharp climax so inverted from what we could wish it to have been, no doubt gives added interest to his work. It gives it, because it seems so hard that a man of so

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ethereal genius should not have been a crowned prince instead of being driven to a lifelong struggle which he was ill fitted to maintain. You cannot harness humming-birds as common carriers, nor spirits like Poe's to prosaic daily concerns. Yet the world has no allowance to make for this law of adaptation. It cares little at the time the poet is living what becomes of that most precious commodity which is called genius, nor did it ever care. But it will rave over and dote upon it a generation after the time help and honors have ceased to be of any earthly avail. Was it not long ago said—

“Seven cities claimed the birth of Homer, dead,  
Through which the living Homer begged his  
bread”?

Yet if Poe felt impediments acutely, a romantic career, with poverty and various ills combined, will not create a genius, as it sometimes will not suppress one. Poe, it must be conceded, had a hard, tragical fate,

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and for his waywardness we need not stop to partition the blame. Differ here as we may, it is not denied that he brought to us, independently of his condition, a bouquet of thrilling verse that seems to hold perennially its place, its beauty, and its wonder, and to glow ever afresh "in the corridors of Time." There was at any rate some subtle substance, or color, or melody in it, that the world does not willingly let die. From his best pages exhales an aroma that his imitators do not quite repeat, and cannot produce. There was a mould of form and a music which were, as the world thinks, his own, but which have been echoed more or less, and have influenced other poets—notably Baudelaire and Swinburne. Nor would the modern decadents have been just what they are if Poe had not lived, and written as he did.

But, in writing thus far, and saying these few things, I am not aiming to enlarge the quantity of Poe criticism which we now

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have, or to even emphasize the mental picture of Poe which is already very definite in the public mind. My purpose, rather, is to speak of a poet little known now, who once made claim to be, or whose friends assert was, Poe's precursor. That he came very near to being a considerable poet, and that he embodies more of the Poe atmosphere and melody than exist anywhere out of Poe's verse, will not be hard to prove.

This author, as was true of Poe himself, belonged to the South; but of his life I have only a slight record, which shows that he was a doctor and lived during his later years, at least, in Georgia. Before Poe was known, this poet—T. H. Chivers, M.D.—was writing various weird and musical lyrics which I presume went from time to time through the Southern press. Nearly sixty years ago he began collecting them in book form; and there were seven or eight volumes of them in all—a much more voluminous poetical legacy than Poe's. I have only seen one of

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these volumes, but the following list gives the names of all the books Chivers wrote, so far as I can discover,\* in the order of their appearance:

"Nacooche, or the Beautiful Star, with other Poems," 12mo, pp. 153, New York, 1837; "The Lost Pleiad, and other Poems," 8vo, pp. 32, New York, 1845; "Eonchs of Ruby: A Gift of Love," 8vo, pp. 108, New York, 1851; "Memorialia, or Phials of Amber," "Full of the Tears of Love," "A Gift for the Beautiful," 12mo, pp. 168, Philadelphia, 1853; "Virginalia, or Songs of My Summer Nights and Gift of Love for the Beautiful," 12mo, pp. 132, Philadelphia, 1853; "The Sons of Usna: A Tragic

\* In the "Diversion of the Echo Club," there is reference to a seventh volume by Chivers, titled "Facets of Diamonds." Allibone's supplement mentions also an eighth, titled "Atlanta, or the True Blessed Island of Poesy"; a Paul epic in three lustra; Macon, Ga., 1855, 8vo. [While this article is going to press I find a record of what must be this prolific poet's first book, and it is titled as follows, "Conrad and Eudora, or the Death of Alonzo. A Threnody," 16mo, pp. 144, Philadelphia, 1834.]

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Apotheosis in Five Acts," pp. 92, Philadelphia, 1858.

It would be difficult, ordinarily, to write about a poem from a consideration chiefly of one of his many volumes, and I feel the limitation this attempt imposes. But it is admitted, I believe, by the few who know the most of Chivers, that he put his characteristic, and probably his best work in the third volume which he issued — "The Eonchs of Ruby." And it is this volume which I have before me. The motto on the title-page of it is as follows:

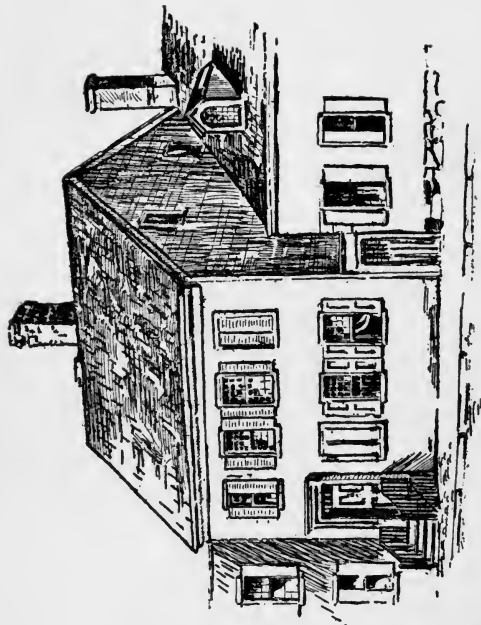
"The precious music of the heart."

—WORDSWORTH.

The publishers were Spalding & Shepard of New York. The publishers of the remaining volumes I do not know, and I regret that I cannot give their title-pages as completely as I have that of the volume which is at hand.

It will be noticed at once that Chivers did not abide altogether by the dictionary,





POE'S RESIDENCE ON CARMINE STREET, NEW YORK, IN 1837



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as no such word as "Eonchs" exists. But more of this tendency of his to speak large, sonorously, and with independence, will appear later on.

The most Poe-like and the best of his pieces in this volume is undoubtedly his "Lily Adair." If he really wrote this poem before Poe was known to him, the coincidence of accent, rhythm, and style with Poe's work suggests a curious study. Although the date of the book containing it was too late to show an antecedence to Poe, the separate pieces in the book must have preceded that year by a distance not now to be determined. It must be remembered, too, that the two volumes which were first issued by Chivers were given to the public—the second six years, and the first fourteen years before "The Eonchs of Ruby" appeared; so that, if we properly antedate the poems Chivers collected in 1837, we find him writing in the Poe manner over sixty years ago—perhaps over seventy years ago.

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But here is the poem, and it will tell, in part at least, its own story:

### LILY ADAIR.

#### I.

The Apollo Belvidere was adorning\*  
The Chamber where Eulalie lay,  
While Aurora, the Rose of the Morning,  
Smiled full in the face of the Day.  
All around stood the beautiful Graces  
Bathing Venus—some combing her hair—  
While she lay in her husband's embraces  
A-moulding my Lily Adair—  
Of my fawn-like Lily Adair—  
Of my dove-like Lily Adair—  
Of my beautiful, dutiful Lily Adair.

#### II.

Where the Oreads played in the Highlands,  
And the Water-Nymphs bathed in the streams,  
In the tall Jasper Reeds of the Islands—  
She wandered in life's early dreams.

---

\*It was a beautiful idea of the Greeks that the procreation of beautiful children might be promoted by keeping in their sleeping apartments an Apollo or Hyacinthus. In this way they not only patronized Art, but begat a likeness of their own love.

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For the Wood-Nymphs then brought from the  
Wildwood

The turtle-doves Venus kept there,  
Which the Dryades tamed, in his childhood,  
For Cupid, to Lily Adair—  
To my dove-like Lily Adair—  
To my lamb-like Lily Adair—  
To my beautiful, dutiful Lily Adair.

### III.

Where the Opaline Swan circled, singing,  
With her eider-down Cygnets at noon,  
In the tall Jasper Reeds that were springing  
From the marge of the crystal Lagoon—  
Rich Canticles, clarion-like, golden,  
Such as only true love can declare,  
Like an Archangel's voice in times olden—  
I went with my Lily Adair—  
With my lamb-like Lily Adair—  
With my saint-like Lily Adair—  
With my beautiful, dutiful Lily Adair.

### IV.

Her eyes, lily-lidded, were azure,  
Cerulean, celestial, divine—  
Suffused with the soul-light of pleasure,  
Which drew all the soul out of mine.  
She had all the rich grace of the Graces,  
And all that they had not to spare;  
For it took all their beautiful faces  
To make one for Lily Adair—

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For my Christ-like Lily Adair—  
For my Heaven-born Lily Adair—  
For my beautiful, dutiful Lily Adair.

### V.

She was fairer by far than that Maiden,  
The star-bright Cassiope,  
Who was taken by Angels to Aiden,  
And crowned with eternity.  
For her beauty the Sea-Nymphs offended,  
Because so surpassingly fair;  
And so death then the precious life ended  
Of my beautiful Lily Adair—  
Of my Heaven-born Lily Adair—  
Of my star-crowned Lily Adair—  
Of my beautiful, dutiful Lily Adair.

### VI.

From her Paradise-Isles in the ocean,  
To the beautiful City of On,  
By the mellifluent rivers of Goshen,  
My beautiful Lily is gone!  
In her Chariot of Fire translated,  
Like Elijah, she passed through the air,  
To the City of God golden-gated—  
The Home of my Lily Adair—  
Of my star-crowned Lily Adair—  
Of my God-loved Lily Adair—  
Of my beautiful, dutiful Lily Adair.

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### VII.

On the vista-path made by the Angels,  
In her Chariot of Fire, she rode,  
While the Cherubim sang their Evangels—  
To the Gates of the City of God.  
For the Cherubim-band that went with her,  
I saw them pass out of the air—  
I saw them go up through the ether  
Into Heaven with my Lily Adair—  
With my Christ-like Lily Adair—  
With my God-loved Lily Adair—  
With my beautiful, dutiful Lily Adair.

Here, without question, is a typical breath of the Poe afflatus, which it needs no delicate ear to detect. The sacrifice of sense to sound is sometimes extreme, but the fault in a lesser degree was also Poe's. If you forget it or pardon it in "Lily Adair," you will feel the same flow of consonance and melody that was a supreme and characteristic part of Poe's endowment. In another poem, which is entitled "Love," appears the note or echo of "The Bells." I quote below a few stanzas from it:

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What is it that makes the maiden  
So like Christ in Heaven above?  
Or, like Heavenly Eve in Aiden,  
Meeting Adam, blushing?—love—  
Love, love, love!  
*Echo*  
Love!

What is it that makes the murmur  
Of the plaintive turtle-dove  
Fill our hearts with so much summer  
Till they melt to passion?—love—  
Love, love, love!  
*Echo*  
Love!

. . . . .  
Like the peace-song of the Angels  
Sent to one from Heaven above  
Who believes in Christ's Evangels  
Is the voice of one in love—  
Love, love, love!  
*Echo*  
Love!

. . . . .

If this poem merely followed "The Bells" we should call it a very weak washing of Poe's chalice; but if it preceded that poem, it may have given to Poe the hint on which he wrought his far superior production.

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### II.

IN "The Vigil of Aiden" Chivers is distinctly Poesque. He opens it as follows:

In the Rosy Bowers of Aiden  
With her ruby lips love-laden,  
Dwelt the mild, the modest maiden,  
Whom Politian called Lenore.  
As the churches, with their whiteness,  
Clothe the earth with her uprightness,  
Clothed she now his soul with brightness,  
Breathing out her heart's love-lore;  
For her lily limbs so tender,  
Like the moon in her own splendor  
Seemed all earthly things to render  
Bright as Eden was of yore.

Then he cried out broken-hearted,  
In this desert world deserted,  
Though she had not yet departed—  
"Are we not to meet, dear maiden!  
In the Rosy Bowers of Aiden,  
As we did in days of yore?"  
And that modest, mild, sweet maiden,  
In the Rosy Bowers of Aiden,  
With her lily lips love-laden,  
Answered, "Yes! forevermore!"  
And the old time Towers of Aiden  
Echoed, "Yes! forevermore!"

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"The Vigil of Aiden" covers twenty-six pages of the "Eonchs of Ruby," so that it is difficult to sample it accurately. But I give a few additional extracts from it below:

Oh! the plaintive sweet beseeching  
Of those lips that death was bleaching

. . . . .

Then her mother cried "My Daughter!"  
As from earth the angels caught her—  
She had passed the Stygian water  
On the Asphodelian shore!

. . . . .

Through the amethystine morning

. . . . .

From the Jasper Reeds of Aiden

. . . . .

Lofty piles of echoing thunder,  
Filling all the sky Heaven under—  
Drowning all the stars with wonder—  
Burthened with the name Lenore!

. . . . .

And the lips of that damned Demon,  
Like the Syren to the seamen,  
With the voice of his dear Leman,  
Answered, "Never—nevermore!"



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And the old time Towers of Aiden  
Echoed, "Never—nevermore!"

. . . . .

"Through the luminiferous Gihon,  
To the Golden City high on  
High Eternity's Mount Zion,  
God built in the Days of Yore—  
To the Golden Land of Goshen,  
Far beyond Time's upper ocean,  
Where, beholding our devotion  
Float the argent orbs all o'er—  
To Avillon's happy Valley,  
Where the breezes ever dally  
With the roses in each Alley—  
There to rest forevermore."

. . . . .

While the Seraphim all waited  
At the portals congregated  
Of the City Golden-gated,  
Crying, "Rise with thy Lenore!"

Did Chivers strike first these cadences,  
now so familiar? Or were they Poe's in-  
vention who made them immortal in "The  
Raven"? In Chivers's poem of "Avalon"  
occur such passages as follow:

For thou didst tread with fire-ensandalled feet,  
Star-crowned, forgiven,

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The burning diapason of the stars so sweet,  
To God in Heaven!

. . . . .

The Violet of her soul-suffused eyes  
Was like that flower  
Which blows its purple trumpet at the skies  
For Dawn's first hour

. . . . .

Four little Angels killed by one cold Death  
To make God glad!

. . . . .

Thou wert like Taleisin, "full of eyes,"  
Babbling of Love!  
My beautiful, Divine Eumenides!  
My gentle Dove!

. . . . .

Kindling the high-uplifted stars at even  
With thy sweet song,  
The Angels, on the Sapphire Sills of Heaven,  
In rapturous throng  
Melted to milder meekness with the Seven  
Bright Lamps of God to glory given  
Leant down to hear thy voice roll up the leven,  
Where thou art lying  
Beside the beautiful undying  
In the valley of the passing of the Moon,  
Oh! Avalon! my son! my son!

On the poem titled "Lord Uther's Lament

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for Ella" the imprint and flavor, which we know as Poe's, are unquestionable. Mark, for instance, these stanzas:

On the mild month of October  
Through the fields of Cooly Rauber  
By the great Archangel Huber,  
Such sweet songs of love did flow,  
From her golden lips preluded  
That my soul with joy was flooded,  
As by God the earth was wooded  
In the days of long ago.

All her soul's divinest treasure  
Poured she out then without measure,  
Till an ocean of deep pleasure  
Drowned my soul from all its woe;  
Like Cecilia Inatella,  
In the Bowers of Boscabella,  
Sang the saintly Angel Ella  
In the days of long ago.

Here, also, is a visible Poe touch from the poem of "The Dying Swan":

"Back to Hell, thou ghostly Horror!"  
Thus I cried, dear Isadore!  
Phantom of remorseless Sorrow!  
Death might from thee pallor borrow,  
Borrow leanness evermore!

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In one of Bayard Taylor's witty accounts in "The Diversions of the Echo Club," Chivers is discussed. "The Ancient" says: "Why, we even had a hope that something wonderful would come out of Chivers!"

*Omnes*—Chivers?

*The Ancient*—Have you never heard of Chivers? He is a phenomenon. . . . One of the finest images in modern poetry is in his "Apollo":

Like cataracts of adamant uplifted into mountains,  
Making oceans metropolitan for the splendor of the  
dawn.

Further on "The Ancient" says: "I remember also a stanza of his 'Rosalie Lee'":

Many mellow Cydonian suckets,  
Sweet apples, anthosmal, divine,  
From the ruby-rimmed beryline buckets,  
Star-gemmed, lily-shaped, hyaline;  
Like the sweet, golden goblet found growing  
On the wild emerald cucumber tree,  
Rich, brilliant, like chrysoprase glowing  
Was my beautiful Rosalie Lee.

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It is not only in the swing of his verse, but in the epithets of this *bizarre* Georgia poet, and sometimes in the exact phrases, that we are confronted with the Poe manner. Such words as "Aiden," "abysmal," "Eulalie," "Asphodel," "Evangel," "Avalon," "Auber," and dozens of others require no comment or footnote. Two poets could not have fallen upon them by original choice, to say nothing of the atmosphere which was drawn around them. Of course there is no question that Poe used this machinery and hypnotism better than Chivers did or could. One leaves an immortal halo around his name, and the other a nebulous mist which failed to condense into a star.

Poe sometimes divorced sense from sonority—so that he was called by Emerson "the jingle poet." Chivers carried this habit often to a grotesqueness fairly lunatic. Poe's nomenclature at least was sound. But Chivers's was so far-fetched and abnormal that meaning never entered many of

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his words, and etymology did not preside over their capricious and erratic birth. Perhaps their mystery makes them more expressive and appalling. Who, for instance, can tell what is an "Eonch"? "Anthosmal" is not entirely normal; and some others which he uses are, apparently, merely the fruitage of his fertile fancy.

Chivers made extreme pomp and majesty of expression his high aim. He could also be fluent when he revealed no message. You are reminded by him of Edwin Lear's "The Jumblies," and of the epithet quality of Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwock." But if he set the mould and pace for Poe, on which Poe erected his own fame, he will surely have some claim to remembrance. It is true the poetry, which is weird and mystifying, and which, to use Taylor's phrases, "has a hectic flush, a strange, fascinating, narcotic quality," is not now in the ascendant. When its fashion comes around again, as it may in nature's cyclic progress, will

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Poe and Chivers stand together as our poetic Castor and Gemini, or "Heavenly Twins"?

One event which suggests Chivers's priority to Poe is the fact that Bryant in his "Selections from American Poetry," made in 1840, gave Poe no place, while Chivers's first book of verse appeared several years before that date; and Poe was hardly known as a poet before 1844.

Chivers's full name and title was Thomas Holley Chivers, M.D. Somehow his fame went to England early; for there has been for years, it is said, a complete set of his works on the shelves of the British Museum. And a complete set of them, it is thought, can be found nowhere else. So hard has it been to pick up the facts in this curious Georgia poet's life that we cannot find them in Allibone's or Appleton's dictionaries, though the editor of the latter one made a diligent effort to produce them.

But it seems Swinburne's knowledge of

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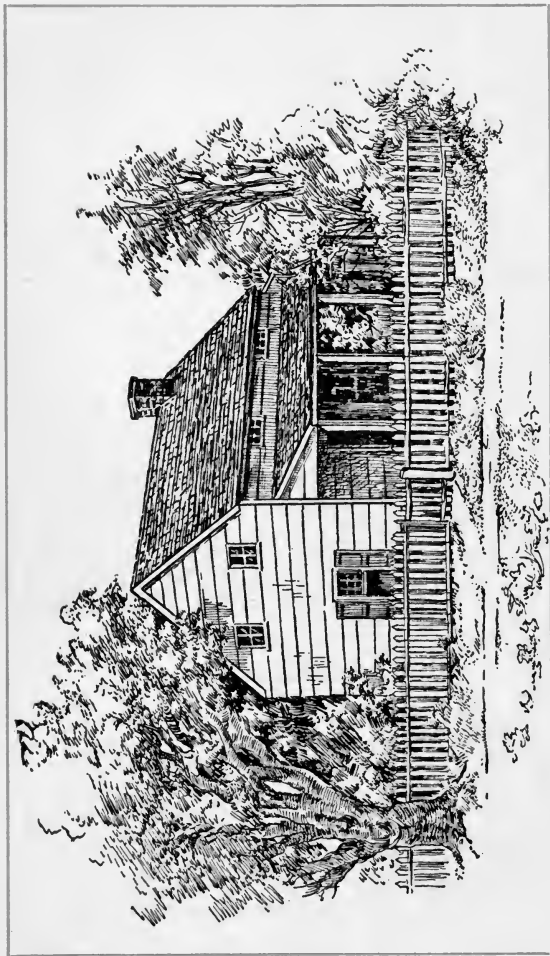
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Chivers's work began before he himself was so very widely known. When Bayard Taylor was in England, nearly thirty years ago, the name of Chivers happened, casually, to be mentioned in Swinburne's presence. "Oh, Chivers, Chivers," said Swinburne, in his peculiar voice, "if you know Chivers, give me your hand." Mr. Stedman says that an allusion to Chivers in Swinburne's hearing causes the author of "*Atalanta in Calydon*" to jump up and down in his chair, when he will repeat with great hilarity and gusto whole passages from Chivers's books.

It has been suggested to me by one critic and author that Swinburne not only repeated them, but that he has put in his own poetry many marks of their influence. This is something near to a laurel or bay-leaf for Chivers, if he was really so forceful. But the imperfect crown, even if it remain so, must be enlarged if his friends can prove, in addition, that he was the precursor of Poe.







THE FORDHAM COTTAGE

## The Poe-Chivers Controversy.

VERY few people to-day, even in literary circles, know anything about Thomas Holley Chivers, M.D. And even these know very little. He was a poet of at least one book before Bryant made that brief anthology of sixty or more American poets in 1840—mostly names that have vanished long since into the everlasting inane—but he was not there represented. His first volume of verse appeared in 1837; though fugitive lyrics from his pen were doubtless afloat on the periodical seas long before that year. Poems over his signature were contributed as late as 1853 to *Graham's Magazine* and to the *Waverley Magazine* of Boston.

It is, however, simply repeating an indubitable fact, to say that a large part of the

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poetry of Chivers is mainly trash—of no account whatever, and not above the reams of stanzas which from time immemorial have decorated as “original” the country newspaper’s poet’s corner. But now and then he struck a note quite above this dead and wide-pervading commonplace; and, whenever he did, the verses brought forth were apt to suggest the mechanism and flavor of Poe. He not only said at various times—especially in a series of letters which he wrote to Mr. Rufus W. Griswold, Poe’s biographer, and which are now in the possession of his son\*—that Poe had borrowed largely from him, but he put the transaction in much bolder terms. The charge of flagrant plagiarism of himself by Poe, in respect even of “The Raven” and “Annabel Lee,” was not withheld, but was violently advanced by Chivers. Nor was he

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\* Mr. W. M. Griswold, of Cambridge, Mass., to whom I am greatly indebted for many of these facts.

## The Poe-Chivers Controversy

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alone in making this charge. Some of his friends took it up and repeated it with a vehemence and an ability worthy of a most sacred cause. There is circumstance enough about this, to say nothing of its singularity, to elevate Chivers into something of a topic—one worth considering at least for a leisure moment.

What is known about this author is, that he published seven or eight volumes of poems between, and inclusive of, 1837 and 1858—a period of twenty-one years. Many of them antedate Poe's period of literary activity, and not a few have the Poe afflatus and melody so strongly inherent in them that even the non-critical reader could not mistake their related quality. In Chivers's "Lily Adair," which crowns his high-water mark of poetic achievement, the Poe manner stands out conspicuously. This refrain from it, for instance, varied in some details at the end of each stanza, illustrates what I mean:

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“In her chariot of fire translated,  
Like Elijah, she passed through the air,  
To the city of God golden-gated—  
The home of my Lily Adair—  
Of my star-crowned Lily Adair—  
Of my God-loved Lily Adair—  
Of my beautiful, dutiful Lily Adair.”

Chivers, in this poem, and in others which resemble Poe's work, made Biblical allusion a dominant trait to an extent that Poe did not, and really attained, though not always with perfect sanity, to much of Poe's witchery and charm.

It is not my intention in this article to repeat the history and evidence which I presented and published elsewhere a few years ago concerning Chivers's claims against Poe. It will be sufficient for the purpose now in hand if I report, as briefly as may be, what Chivers and his friends, and those who antagonized the Chivers assumption, had to say about it nearly fifty years ago.

In a quite able and stalwart way Chivers

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himself opened the contest, under the *nom de plume* of "Fiat Justitia," in the *Waverley Magazine* of July 30, 1853. In a long article, entitled "Origin of Poe's 'Raven,'" he claims that the laudators of Poe—particularly N. P. Willis, who said of "The Raven" that it "electrified the world of imaginative readers, and has become the type of a school of poetry of its own"—"betray not only a deplorable ignorance of the current literature of the day, but the most abject poverty of mind in the knowledge of the true nature of poetry." He then quotes from his own book, "The Lost Pleiad," the following lines from the poem "To Allegra in Heaven," which was published in 1842, a few years before "The Raven" appeared. He asserts that these lines "show the intelligent reader the true and only source from which Poe obtained his style" in that poem:

"Holy angels now are bending to receive thy soul  
ascending

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Up to Heaven to joys unending, and to bliss  
which is divine;  
While thy pale cold form is fading under Death's  
dark wings now shading  
Thee with gloom which is pervading this poor  
broken heart of mine!  
And as God doth lift the spirit up to Heaven there  
to inherit  
Those rewards which it doth merit, such as  
none have reaped before;  
Thy dear father will to-morrow lay thy body with  
deep sorrow,  
In the grave which is so narrow, there to rest  
forevermore."

In this article Chivers also says that Poe is not entitled to priority in the use of the refrain "Nevermore." It was Chivers, he says (still writing under his *nom de plume*), who originated this in a poem entitled "Lament on the Death of My Mother," published in 1837 in the Middletown, Conn., *Sentinel and Witness*. The following extract from it is the proof he offers:

"Not in the mighty realms of human thought,  
Nor in the kingdom of the earth around;  
Nor where the pleasures of the world are sought,  
Nor where the sorrows of the earth are found—



## The Poe-Chivers Controversy

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Nor on the borders of the great deep sea,  
Wilt thou return again from heaven to me—

*No, nevermore!"*

The reader, I imagine, will be likely to think that Poe gave this refrain a more potent and appealing quality.

It is urged that Poe knew of Chivers's "The Lost Pleiad, and Other Poems," as he "spoke of it in the highest terms in the *Broadway Journal*, in 1845." The writer admits that "Poe was a great artist, a consummate genius; no man that ever lived having possessed a higher sense of the poetic art than he did." But he urges that this fact must not obliterate the other; viz., that he took the liberty, arrogated by genius, to borrow.

After saying that Chivers (he speaks of himself all along as another person) was the first poet to make the trochaic rhythm express an elegiac theme, and the first to use the euphonic alliteration adopted by Poe, he cites the following extract from a

## In the Poe Circle

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poem of his published before Poe's masterpiece in verse appeared:

"As an egg, when broken, never can be mended,  
but must ever

Be the same crushed egg forever, so shall this  
dark heart of mine,

Which, though broken, is still breaking, and shall  
nevermore cease aching,

For the sleep which has no waking—for the  
sleep which now is thine!"

To step up to "The Raven" from so grotesquely low a level, one might easily consider—even were the charge of plagiarism proved—a complete absolution of blame.

And, if this is admitted to be the fountain whence Poe got his form, an irreverent critic might say he reproduced it with unsurpassable effect and dissociated from it the atmosphere of Humpty-Dumpty.

In the *Waverley Magazine* of August 13th of the same year, "Fiat Justitia" (Chivers) is taken in hand by "H. S. C." and "J. J. P.," on behalf of Poe. The difference in altitude and genius of the two writers is

## The Poe-Chivers Controversy

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emphasized by them. Poe's personal character is palliated; but the question of priority in the use of the Poe alliterative rhythm is not argued. The only reply touching this is by the first of the two writers, who shows that "Nevermore," as a refrain, is nobody's trademark, since it has been used even earlier than Chivers's employment of it. As an instance buttressing this statement, he offers the following stanzas from a very old scrap-book in which the poem of which they are part is credited to the Cheshire, England, *Herald*:

“Now the holy pansies bloom  
Round about thy lonely tomb;  
All thy little woes are o'er;  
We shall meet thee here no more—  
Nevermore!

But the robin loves to sing  
Near thee in the early spring;  
Thee his song will cheer no more  
By our trellised cottage door—  
Nevermore!”

The same writer asks if his antagonist

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cannot, by his form of logic, prove that Poe stole his poem of "The Bells" from the nursery rhyme of "Ding Dong Bell." A week later than this, "Fiat Justitia" reappears in the *Waverley Magazine*, together with an ally signing himself "Felix Forresti" (possibly Chivers again\*), who, seeing him attacked by two knights of the pen, "takes up the cudgels" for Chivers. In fact, to be more truthful, all these writers — speaking metaphorically — take up pitchforks and machetes. Their Billingsgate style savors of the Arizona *Howler*, and seems impossible to Boston. In this week's onslaught, however, no point of note occurs, except that the latter writer exhumes from a poem by Chivers, upon Poe, which was published in the *Georgia Citizen* about 1850, the following lines:

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\* That an author could so write of himself, under masked signatures, is surprising. But the articles were substantially made up from his letters to Mr. R. W. Griswold, Poe's biographer.

## The Poe-Chivers Controversy

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“Like the great prophet in the desert lone,  
He stood here waiting for the golden morning;  
From Death’s dark vale I hear his distant moan  
Coming to scourge the world he was adorning—  
Scorning, in glory now, their impotence of scorn-  
ing.”

And now in apotheosis divine,  
He stands enthroned upon the immortal moun-  
tains

Of God’s eternity, forevermore to shine—  
Star-crowned, all purified with oil-anointings—  
Drinking with Ulalume from out the eternal  
fountains.

And the writer adds: “Until both . . . cham-  
pions [of Poe] can write just such lines as  
these, they had better ‘shut up shop.’”

But neither side “shut up shop” just  
then. In the issue of September 10th,  
“Fiat Justitia” and “J. J. P.” reappear.  
The former occupies nearly three columns  
with extracts from Chivers’s poems to show  
the Poe manner, and to prove that it was in  
these poems Poe found it. The following  
sample is from “The Lost Pleiad”:

“And though my grief is more than vain,  
Yet shall I never cease to grieve;

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Because no more, while I shall live,  
Will I behold thy face again!  
No more while I have life or breath,  
No more till I shall turn to dust!  
But I shall see thee after death,  
And in the heavens above I trust."

The following extract is from Chivers's  
"Memorialia":

"I shall nevermore see pleasure,  
Pleasure nevermore but pain—  
Pleasure, losing that dear treasure  
Whom I loved here without measure,  
Whose sweet eyes were Heaven's own azure,  
Speaking, mild, like sunny rain;  
I shall nevermore see pleasure  
For his coming back again!"

Of "The Lost Pleiad" volume, "Fiat Justitia" says that a Cincinnati reviewer declared, some years ago, that "there is nothing in the wide scope of literature, where passion, pathos, and pure art are combined, more touchingly tender than this whole unsurpassed and (in our opinion) unsurpassable poem."

Another sample of Chivers's pre-Poe

## The Poe-Chivers Controversy

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likeness the writer finds in a poem titled "Ellen Æyre," which was printed in a Philadelphia paper in 1836. He gives this stanza from it:

"Like the Lamb's wife, seen in vision,  
Coming down from heaven above,  
Making earth like Fields Elysian,  
Golden city of God's love—  
Pure as jasper—clear as crystal—  
Decked with twelve gates richly rare—  
Statued with twelve angels vestal—  
Was the form of Ellen Æyre—  
Gentle girl so debonair—  
Whitest, brightest of all cities, saintly angel,  
Ellen Æyre."

Very many other Poe-resembling extracts are given; but these must suffice from the verse. To show that Poe borrowed from Chivers in a prose criticism, our writer copies the following passage from an article by Chivers in the *Atlanta Luminary*:

"There is poetry in the music of the birds—in the diamond radiance of the evening star—in the sun-illumined whiteness of the fleecy clouds—in

## In the Poe Circle

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the open frankness of the radiant fields—in the soft, retiring mystery of the vales—in the cloud-sustaining grandeur of the many-folded hills—in the revolutions of the spheres—in the roll of rivers, and the run of rills.”

Now look on this, from Poe’s “The Poetic Principle”:

“He recognizes the ambrosia, which nourishes his soul, in the bright orbs that shine in heaven . . . in the waving of the grain-fields—in the blue distance of mountains—in the grouping of clouds . . . in the twinkling of the half-hidden brooks—in the gleaming of silver rivers—in the repose of sequestered lakes—in the star-mirroring depths of lonely wells . . . in the song of birds—in the sighing of the night-wind . . . in the fresh breath of the woods, etc.”

Triumphantly the writer says, “Now . . . you will no longer wonder where Poe obtained his very delightful knowledge of the art of poetry.” Not only the Chivers prose extract, but also the verse passages quoted by him were written, he affirms, “long anterior” to the parallel passages in Poe.

In the *Waverley* of September 24th fol-



## The Poe-Chivers Controversy

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lowing, "J. J. P." quotes Poe as saying of "The Raven," "I pretend to no originality in either the rhythm or metre." He also quotes Poe as saying of the passage by Chivers containing the egg simile: ".That the lines very narrowly missed *sublimity* we will grant; that they came within a step of it we admit; but, unhappily, the step is that *one* step which, time out of mind, has intervened between the *sublime* and the *ridiculous*."

The whole controversy was continued with warmth in the *Waverley Magazine* of October 1, 1853, by "Fiat Justitia," who began it. But I am told, too, that it was reopened in a later volume. As the *Magazine* office files were long ago destroyed by fire, I cannot say how the renewed controversy fared; though it probably closed with nothing fresher than new epithets coined by the combatants. Nor is anything that is particularly new added by this article. It was mainly a threshing of the old straw,

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which, all the way through, was supplemented by a rhythm analysis that would take too much space to follow. From the Chivers poem "To Allegra in Heaven" he adduces this heretofore unquoted line,

"Like some snow-white cloud just under Heaven  
some breeze has torn asunder"—

which he thinks suggested Poe's two lines:

"And the silken, sad uncertain rustling of each  
purple curtain"—

"Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly."

Chivers, it seems, wrote for a variety of periodicals, among which were *Graham's Magazine* and *Peterson's*; and in the year this controversy was raging he contributed poems to the *Waverley Magazine* itself. In "Fiat Justitia's" contention, it is said that Poe was obliged to reply in the *Broadway Journal*, in defence of the plagiaristic charge, to some writer using somewhere the *nom de plume* of "Outis." There was,

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in connection with the Chivers assumption and advocacy, a surprisingly earnest and hot assault. Only one more of these militant articles (possibly by Chivers again) shall I notice here. He, signing himself "Philo Veritas" in the *Waverley Magazine* of October 8th, 1853, communicates a "Railroad Song" taken from *Graham's*, which was written by Chivers, and which he terms "a truly *original* poem." He does so in part for the purpose of "exposing one of the most pitiful plagiarisms" known—the "wishy-washy thing" entitled "Railroad Lyric," that had appeared in *Putnam's Monthly* of the previous May. Here are some lines from the one hundred and thirteen composing Chivers's poem:

"All aboard! Yes! Tingle, tingle,  
Goes the bell as we all mingle—  
No one sitting solely single—  
As the steam begins to fizzle—  
With a kind of sighing sizzle—  
Ending in a piercing whistle—  
. . . . .

## In the Poe Circle

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And the cars begin to rattle,  
And the springs go tittle-tattle—  
Driving off the grazing cattle,  
As if Death were Hell pursuing  
To his uttermost undoing,  
Down the iron road to ruin—  
With a clitter, clatter, clatter,  
Like the Devil beating batter  
Up in Hell in iron platter,  
As if something was the matter;  
Then it changes to a clanking,  
And a clinking and a clanking,  
And a clanking and a clinking—

. . . . .  
As if Hell for our damnation,  
Had come down with desolation

. . . . .  
While the engine overteeming  
With excruciating screaming,  
Spits his vengeance out in steaming.

. . . . .  
Still repeating clitter, clatter  
Clitter, clatter, clitter, clatter  
As if something was the matter—  
While the woodlands all are ringing,  
And the birds forget their singing,  
And away to Heaven go winging.

. . . . .  
Then returns again to clatter  
Clitter, clatter, clitter, clatter

## The Poe-Chivers Controversy

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Like the Devil beating batter  
Up in Hell in iron platter—  
Which subsides into a clankey,  
And a clinkey and a clankey  
And a clankey and a clinkey  
And a clinkey, clankey, clankey—  
Then to witchey, witchey, witchey,  
Chewey-witchey, chewey-witchey—  
Chewey-witchey, witchey, witchey,  
Then returns again to fizzle,  
With a kind of sighing sizzle—  
Ending in a piercing whistle—  
And the song that I now offer  
For Apollo's golden coffer—  
With the friendship that I proffer—  
Is for riding on a Rail."

There was one poem of Chivers's, entitled "The Little Boy Blue," copied in the *Waverley Magazine*, which is singularly saturated with the nomenclature and manner that Poe affected. Here are a few illustrative stanzas out of the thirty-seven to which it extended:

"The little boy blue  
Was the boy that was born  
In the forests of Dew  
On the Mountains of Morn.

. . . . .

## In the Poe Circle

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There the pomegranate bells—  
They were made to denote  
How much music now dwells  
In the nightingale's throat.

On the green banks of On,  
By the city of No,  
There he taught the wild swan  
Her white bugle to blow.

Where the cherubims rode  
On four lions of gold,  
There this cherub abode  
Making new what was old.

When the angels came down  
To the shepherds at night,  
Near to Bethlehem Town  
Clad in garments of light,  
There the little Boy Blue  
Blew aloud on his horn,  
Songs as soft as the dew  
From the Mountains of Morn.

But another bright place  
I would stop to declare,  
For the Angel of the Face  
Of Jehovah was there.

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Now this happy soul dwells  
Where the waters are sweet,  
Near the Sevenfold Wells  
Made by Jesus's feet."

Not only are the Poe phrases here, but here, too, is the tossing, tumultuous imagination of William Blake. I know of no writer who, so much as Chivers did, fell into Blake's phantasmagorial extravagance.

The upshot of this cursory consideration of the voluminous controversy—beginning before Poe died, and virulently continued for some years after his death—shows that Poe knew Chivers's work and paid attention to him in more than one reference. The literary representatives of the minor poet appear, also, to bring forward some striking examples of verse which he wrote, which was outwardly like Poe's, and which considerably antedated "The Bells," "The Raven," and "Annabel Lee," on which Poe's poetic fame rests.

What conclusion must be drawn from

## In the Poe Circle

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these facts? Each reader will be certain to make his own. No critic will doubt that to Poe belonged the wonderful magic and mastery of this species of song. If to him who says a thing best the thing belongs, no one will hesitate to decide that Poe is entitled to the bays which crown him. It is a fact that, with all the contemporary airing of the subject, it is Poe's celebrity and not Chivers's that remains. The finer instinct and touch are what the world takes account of. Chivers, except at rare intervals, did not approach near enough to the true altitude. He put no boundary between what was grotesque and what was inspired. He was too short-breathed to stay poised on the heights, and was but accidentally poetic. But we may accord him a single leaf of laurel, if no more, for what he came so near achieving in the musical lyric of "Lily Adair." Truly enough Shakespeare says:

"The lunatic, the lover, and the poet  
Are of imagination all compact . . ."



## The Poe-Chivers Controversy

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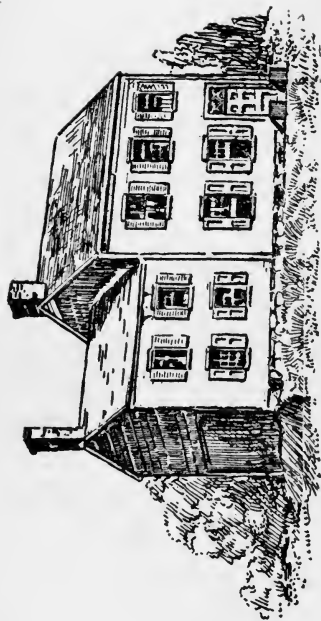
Their mental and spiritual territories interblend. The same frenzy is the endowment of each—as charcoal is in essence the diamond. As you differentiate and develop it you make your titular distinction and place. But it is not a small thing to have been mingled in some slight association with genius, and to have some credit you with it. In an Oriental poem the clay pipe speaks of its contentment, since it cannot be a rose, of having, by a fortunate association, attained to some of the rose's fragrance.

## Poe's Opinion of "The Raven."

THERE seems to be no end of interest in Poe legends and Poeana. Poe is the one American poet—Whitman, perhaps, being a second—whose work has produced a *cult*; and, at the same time, exercises a fascination which is contagious and indescribable. Some might possibly call it hypnotic. He uses what Emerson calls "polarized words"; and, while they haunt the mind, and even the very soul of the reader, they virtually create an atmosphere as distinct as that—though not like that—in one of Corot's landscapes.

Poe contributed little to human thought. He had no ethical message whatever to deliver. He could not have written Wordsworth's "Ode on the Intimations of Human Immortality"—which is as pious, though not burdensomely so, as it is poetic. What





HOUSE WHERE POE WROTE "THE RAVEN," BOULEVARD, N. Y.

## Poe's Opinion of "The Raven"

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his poetry is, is not what Matthew Arnold defined poetry to be—"a criticism of life." It is more like a series of musical diversions—fluent, sensuous, weird, sorrowful, and sepulchral, even subterranean almost in passages. But what differentiates it most specifically is, that it is sensuous. It moves no one to do anything; it, on the contrary, makes you feel something. In reading it you mourn for a vanished *Aiden* or a lost *Lenore*.

It is a curious fame that rests so much upon so little—at least, upon so small a body of work. For, if you take "The Raven," "Annabel Lee," and "The Bells" from Poe's poems—if you do not consider these at all—what would his poetic fame have been? Could it have been very great?

But with these poems he did undoubtedly put an imprint on the literature of his day and time that is matchless. Its influence is, at any rate, a more potent force in Eng-

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land and France than any other poet of our nation has yet attained to. Perhaps the weird and eerie has naturally upon the human mind a more durable and clinging hold than the things that are sober and earthly. However this may be, "The Raven" alone, as a poem, seems to go on in people's minds with a constant crescendo of admiration from one year and generation to another.

We get a good deal from time to time about the way it was composed. Persons who knew Poe, and those who have heard orally from them what he said, have given us many edifying stories concerning Poe's life at the time this poem was written, and the circumstances under which it was composed.

There are but two American poems that I can think of whose bringing forth has been talked of anywhere near so much as this poem's birth has been, if any other than these three have been talked of in this respect at all. The two I allude to are, of

## Poe's Opinion of "The Raven"

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course, Bryant's "Thanatopsis" and Longfellow's "Excelsior."

Does anybody remember, though—but this is an "aside"—that Emerson's "Humble Bee" when it first appeared opened thus?

"Fine Humble Bee,  
Fine Humble Bee,  
Where thou art is clime for me,"

instead of—in the vastly improved version—

"Burly, dozing Humble Bee,  
Where thou art is clime for me."

How those two new adjectives, encyclopedic almost in their bottled essence of description, and displacing "fine," strengthened the piece! But you will find, in the very first edition of Dana's "Household Book of Poetry," that the poem is printed in the first fashion—as it stood I suppose in "The Dial," before it was revised for Emerson's first volume of verses.

But I must return to Poe and "The Raven." The brief story I have to tell about

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them I got orally from an author who once had some vogue, but who is now nearly completely forgotten. His name was at one time in many of our best periodicals; and the old *Democratic Review* once had a considerable critique upon his poetic position and promise. He was likened by the writer of the review article to Shelley and Keats; and there were passages of his verse given which brought out, as I remember, a considerable of the suggested resemblance. Probably, though, his poem of "The Sword of Bunker Hill"—which was set to music—best typifies his prevailing poetic style, which was, in the main, noted for being eloquent and patriotic.

William Ross Wallace (for it is he to whom I refer) was not unlike Poe in both temperament and habits. He was not a little like him in physique—in brightness of the eye, and in a superb courtliness of manner. He had the same, or a similar, irresolute will; but he was a delightful compan-



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ion to meet if you met him at the right time. He was, I believe, a Southerner by birth, as Poe was by acclimation.

Wallace told me (in the early war-time when I first met him) that he knew Poe tolerably well. They were, he said, on pleasant and familiar terms; and, it would seem (as Keats and Reynolds did), they read over to each other their not yet published poetical work. It was in obedience to this habit that Poe, on meeting Wallace one day, told him in some such words as these (I will be sponsor now only for their substance, and not for their form, or for the form of the colloquy between the known and the now-unknown poet):

"Wallace," said Poe, "I have just written the greatest poem that ever was written."

"Have you?" said Wallace. "That is a fine achievement."

"Would you like to hear it?" said Poe.

"Most certainly," said Wallace.

Thereupon Poe began to read the so to-be

## In the Poe Circle

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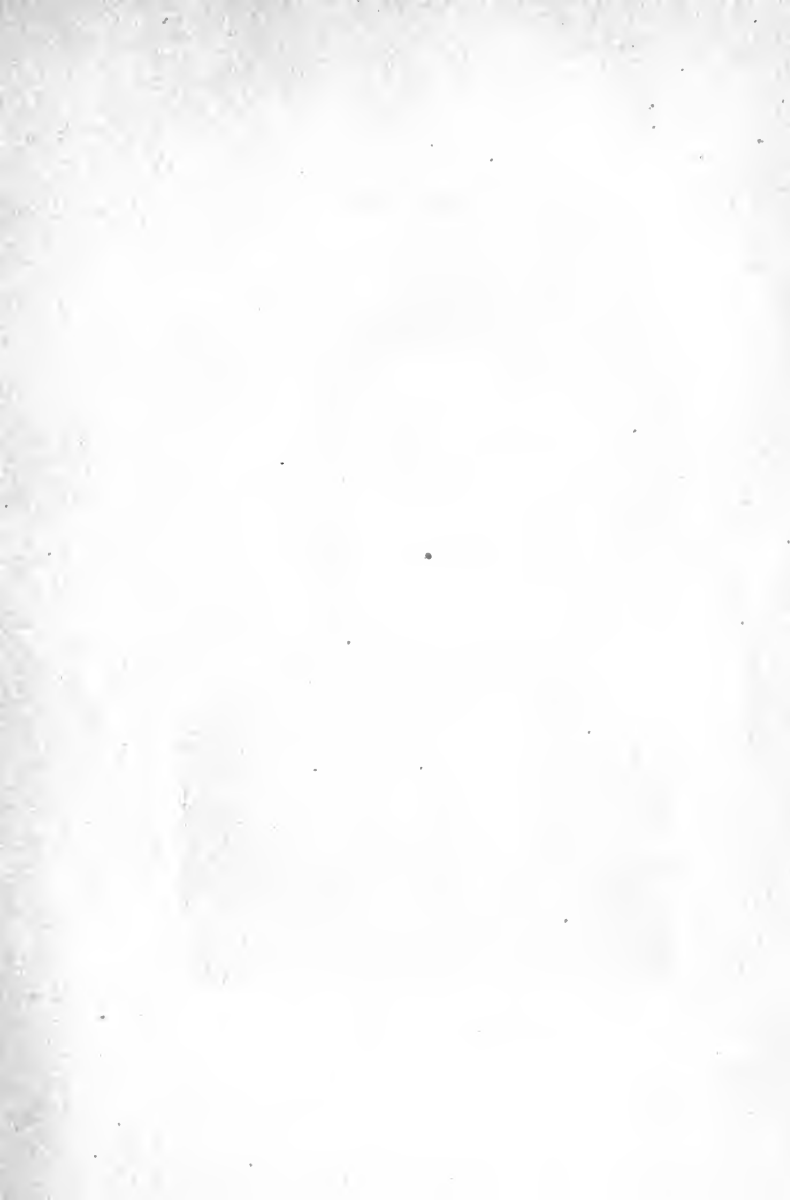
famous verses in his best way—which I believe was always an impressive and captivating way. When he had finished he turned to Wallace for his approval of them—when Wallace said:

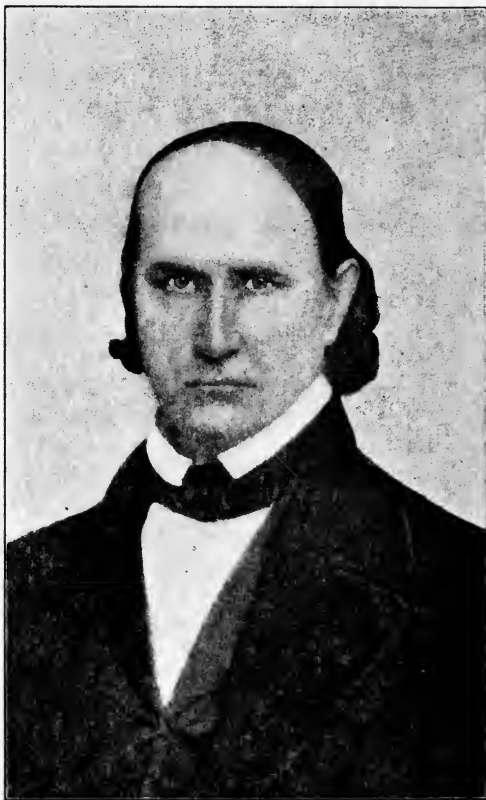
“Poe—they are fine; uncommonly fine.”

“Fine?” said Poe, contemptuously. “Is that all you can say for this poem? I tell you it’s the greatest poem that was ever written.”

And then they separated—not, however, before Wallace had tried to placate, with somewhat more pronounced praise, the pettish poet.

And to-day there are critics who say—not knowing Poe’s own opinion of “The Raven”—that it is “the greatest poem ever written.” Whether it is or not, it bids fair to be the one that will be the most and the longest talked about.





THOMAS HOLLEY CHIVERS.

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## Thomas Holley Chivers.

UNTIL a recent date it has been difficult to give any definite or detailed account of Chivers, the eccentric Southern poet. The few relatives and friends of the author—and he was quite a voluminous author, for a poet—have not been aware that there was much popular interest in him; or else, for reasons of their own, they have not wished to gratify this curiosity as to his life. His name is not to be found in any biographical cyclopedia, though it is mentioned in Allibone's "Dictionary of Authors," a book that limits its function mainly to titles and names.

When Appleton's "Cyclopedia of American Biography" was being compiled, a few years ago, the editors were unable to find enough facts about Chivers to warrant the

insertion of even a short paragraph. All that a limited number of literary men knew about him was that such a man had been born early in the century; that he was of a Southern family, but had spent some time in New England; that he was a physician in full standing; and finally—a fact of more interest and importance—that he wrote lyrics which, when he employed his best style, were strangely like Poe's. Added to this piquant revelation was the strong assertion of himself, and of competent and distinguished persons, that his style was not borrowed from Poe, but that it appeared prior to Poe's characteristic work, and therefore set the pace by which Poe became famous; giving the suggestion from which grew the latter's mystic fascination. To be brought into relations like these may not constitute fame, but it is a sort of second cousin to it, and must always beget an alluring interest in the author who came so near to a high goal.

## Thomas Holley Chivers

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The facts which the reviewer now finds at his disposal are due in great measure to Mr. John Quincy Adams, of Washington, Ga., a relative of Chivers, and himself a writer of skill and vigor. The father of the poet was Col. Robert Chivers, who had three sons and four daughters. Thomas Holley, the eldest, was born in 1807, two years before Poe, at Digby Manor, a few miles south of Washington, Ga. His progenitors were English on both sides, and settled originally in Virginia. On the mother's side the name was Digby, her ancestors having been prominent in England during the latter part of the seventeenth century.

Mr. Adams states that Colonel Chivers was a rich planter and mill-owner. Recognizing the genius of his son, he became over-indulgent to him, so that the young man was imbued with a full sense of his own importance. He graduated with distinction in medicine at Transylvania, now

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the University of Kentucky, in or about 1828. The statement which has been made that he was a graduate of Yale is erroneous. "He cared only for the scientific cult of his profession," Mr. Adams says, "though to the day of his death he never failed to serve gratis those too poor to hire a doctor. After a few years' practice he chose literature as an occupation, and having always abundant means for his solitary and temperate life, he lived and died in the pride of his intellectuality. He despised all mere pretense toward scholarship. Among ordinary people he was a most 'unclubbable' man, but among his equals he was a charming companion."

His correspondence discloses the fact that he was held in high esteem, and that he was an authority on a wide range of subjects, particularly the Hebrew language and literature. Many of these letters, now in the possession of Mr. Adams, were written by men of note to Chivers, and among



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them is one by Poe himself, pathetic with lament, mentioning the *Stylus*, which he intended to start and of which so much has been written. In this Poe says: "Please lend me \$50 for three months—I am so poor and friendless I am half distracted; but I shall be all right when you and I start our magazine." (It was \$500 for which Poe had asked Halleck when he started the *Broadway Journal*.)

At the age of twenty-five Chivers went North to live, shortly afterward marrying Miss Harriet Hunt, who is described as having been a woman of great beauty. Four children were born to them. The tragical fact is mentioned that these children were all carried off by a virulent form of typhoid fever while the family was staying at Digby Manor. A son and two daughters were afterward born and grew up. When the son died, his four children were adopted by his second sister, Mrs. Isabel Brown, now living in Decatur, Ga.

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The other daughter, Mrs. Potter, lives in Connecticut.

In 1856 Chivers returned to the South and made his final home in Decatur. A physiological professorship in a medical college in Savannah was offered him, but his health was impaired, and he was obliged to decline the appointment. Mr. Adams mentions that he was a painter, and that he made frequent portraits of his family. He also made some notable pen-and-ink sketches. He appears to have had an inventive turn of mind as well, for he originated a machine for unwinding the fibre from silk cocoons, a device of so much merit that it received a silver cup at one of the Southern expositions.

It is not pleasant to recall the fact that the poet's library, being on the line of Sherman's march to the sea, was destroyed or confiscated, and that all his manuscripts were more or less injured. This was after Chivers's death, which occurred at Decatur,

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December 18th, 1858. His demise received wide notice in the North, and the breadth of his territory of renown among scholars is indicated by the fact that Professor Gierlow, a Danish author, wrote a beautiful poem on the event.

William Gilmore Simms, at that time one of the greatest names in Southern literature, took much interest in Chivers, and called him "the wild Mazeppa of letters." He frequently rallied his friend on his choice of strange words and on "the monotony of his sorrow." In good-humored retaliation, no doubt, the doctor advised Simms to cease writing stupid novels and "take up literature as a pleasure."

Chivers's face was of poetic cast. The fine lines of the mouth alone gave it distinction, and the intent, piercing eye and dark, flowing hair, as well as the contour of the head, with its massive forehead, completed an intellectual ensemble at least competent for fame.

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The pathetic conclusion of the whole matter of his life and work is embodied in the one word "almost." He did not quite touch the high and ambitious empyrean at which he aimed. There were great visions before him, but he could not put them into perfectly clarified expression. At times he nearly found the vehicle of words that uplifts us, but some lack of needed impulse or finish, some want of surrounding atmosphere, or some other partial defect, tells the story of defeat. But there is room enough for a hospitable memory of him, and reason enough to honor his daring. We may put him at least in the Poe rubric, and recall, in exalting Poe, a few of the typical attributes which gave Chivers his place in poetry.

## Baudelaire and Poe: A Brief Parallel.

IF we except Boëtie and Montaigne, who were distinct contemporaries and personal friends, one may search very far through literary annals to find two writers with closer affinities of thought than Baudelaire and Poe. The French author seems to have been born to celebrate and continue the Poesque aroma and effluence.

Not merely their tastes and manner were alike; their careers, too, have close resemblances. Poe was born in 1809, and his French admirer in 1821—a dozen years later. Baudelaire's father dying when the son was but six years old placed him very soon under new control. He found himself, the year after this event, under the rule of a stepfather. It is said this foster-parent,

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who was Colonel Aupick, was proud of his stepson, but wished to give him a military career. The determination on the boy's part to be a poet was, however, dominant; and this collision of plans may have stirred him to the irregularities that followed, and led to his expulsion from college.

An English writer said some years ago that Colonel Aupick, having been promoted to a general's position, could have given his stepson a rapid advancement if he had been willing to join the army; but, "to the immense surprise of his parents," he would not. Nothing should win him but the profession of letters.

"The young man hated his stepfather, the reasons he gave for his hatred being that he *was* his stepfather, that he was very demonstrative, and that he knew nothing of literature." One must see how nearly like Mr. Allan's attitude to Poe this situation proved to be.

Baudelaire flew to Paris from his home

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in Lyons, and was charmed with its literary circle and "the magic" of his new world. "He struck up an acquaintance with Balzac," says Esme Stuart, "and set up as a 'dandy.'" In the mean time he was working hard; "but when barely twenty years old his mother interfered, and, enforcing her legal authority, sent him to India in order to separate him from his evil surroundings." Within ten months he would tolerate exile no longer, and returned suddenly to Paris.

The writer who gives this account says: "His absence must have helped to give him greater mastery over English, which language in after years was to bring him to the knowledge of Edgar Allan Poe. When the poet's majority arrived, he found himself with £3,000 in his pocket and delivered from parental authority. Then began his unfettered bachelor life. He determined, if possible, to be something—to aim at perfection; but the taste for beautiful pictures

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and antique furniture led him into extravagance little in accordance with his means."

Through a dealer more shrewd than honest, he was saddled with a burden of indebtedness that saddened his remaining years. With debts and a vacant pocket-book he could feel the position as well as he could absorb the poetry of Poe. It is a singular double parable that his career presents; for he had on his creative and unworldly side the dainty taste and musical charm of his model. The torment for attaining perfection was his in a marvellous degree. Mr. Stuart describes him as "always touching and retouching his verses, ever consumed by the passion for style, which to the ordinary public is merely an insane mania."

Like Poe, he required moods for his work. He was a critic and art lover too. In dress, and in a multitude of ways, he had marked idiosyncrasies. He sympathized with democracy; and for a time was



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somewhat demonstrative against aristocratic ways. The revolution of 1848 was in the air, and it touched "his impressionable brain."

He was unfortunate in titling a collection of his poems "*Fleurs du Mal*." He claimed to show that evil was not wholly without its better side, and that good is in some mysterious manner related to the whole scheme of things. It is an attitude not so unfamiliar in France as it is in England and America. Victor Hugo praised the play of his art by saying: "Art is like the azure—it is an infinite field, and you have just proved it."

Good as his work was in the sense of form and art, he had his struggle with editors, as Poe did. For work far more excellent than journalism could show or than editors demanded he could only obtain the low rates of the journalistic craft. He was a frequent wanderer "in out-of-the-way places, looking worn, wan, and shabby." "No wonder,"

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says Mr. Stuart, whose condensed account of him is most graphic, "that more than ever Edgar Poe seemed to him his twin brother of misfortune." He at last "had recourse to stimulants," to put the real away from his vision. To Belgium he hurried in despair, and from that country writes thus:

"Think what I suffer in a place where the trees are black and the flowers are without scent, and where no conversation worth the name can be heard. You might go all over Belgium and not find a soul that speaks."

He longs for his mother, "who takes such care not to reproach me." In truth, says this chronicler, "she was another Mrs. Clemm, and the sick man, remembering his childhood, longed for her care and sympathy." Not happy with publishers, or in being able to secure a sufficient hope or reward for his works, he fell ill. His death, through brain paralysis, was equal in its

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tragedy to Poe's—if it did not surpass that unfortunate poet's ending.

I have not chosen to dwell upon the moral side of Baudelaire's work. There is no room in these notes for a literary parallel to do more than mark that. And how striking and singular a one it is! Baudelaire does not deny that he echoed at times, whether consciously or otherwise, Poe's thoughts. He also gave a large portion of his work to make Poe more widely known. Four of his eight volumes are "consecrated to Poe" and his writings.

The two affinities never met, and it is not certain that Baudelaire's name was one with which Poe was ever acquainted. Edgar Allan Poe died in 1849, aged forty, and Charles Baudelaire in 1867, aged forty-six years.

# In the Poe Circle

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PAID  
*J.B.*  
 George B. Graham, Esq.  
 No. 98, Chestnut Street,  
 Philadelphia.



My Dear Graham, I send you three poems for your Magazine. I sent  
 you a poem some time ago about the death of child. As I have been  
 thinking, I don't know whether you published it or not. If you have  
 not done so, you think it is possible. Yours most truly, *Wm. B. Allen*

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*The Poet's Lullaby to the Night.*

*By T. H. Chivers, M.D.*

"Night is fair Virtue's memorial friend":—Young.

- The clock strikes twelve!—The World is sleeping now—  
An antitype of that great sleep called death!  
While o'er this fair page my pale brow  
Bangs clammy, in this cold but fragrant breath!  
How many heads that thought-disturbing toll—  
Trembling thy darkness with its awful chime?  
It sounded like the last thought in my soul,  
Thursing of thee, thou deathbed of man's time!
- I will not sleep—my thoughts, like Noah's Dove,  
Shall go out from my soul's ark unto thee,  
Thou deluge where the Day lies drowned! in love,  
And bring the Olive-leaf of peace to me!  
I will not sleep—there is no rest in sleep  
For him whose soul is restless for the leaf  
Which floats upon thy dark, oblivious deep,  
And is an antidote for all my grief!
- For that which I have sought the most in life,  
Appears most distant from my grasp to me—  
Eluding all my powers— all but that grief  
Which now my soul drowns in the thought of thee!  
It is that glorious Amaranth of Fame,  
Which blooms immortal, that enchants me now;  
The only balm for that life-killing flame,  
Which, rising from my heart, burns on my brow!
- It is not that my soul is vain of praise,  
That it would drink of that joy-giving stream;  
But feels undying wants within to rise  
Some Monument which others may esteem.  
I love the sympathies of other minds—  
Not that my soul is needy of mere praise—  
I am not poor for friends—but something binds  
My spirit, sighing, to the After-Days.
- I cannot call it any thing but love—  
A longing in our souls to never die;  
To be with men as we shall be above—  
Told in the robes of immortality.  
If this is vanity, God made me so

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And placed it in the center of my soul—  
From which all thought proceeds—this wight doth grow—  
Strong as the lightning's flash—the thunder's roll!  
— If not in life my soul your praise can have,  
It is an idle breath flying on the air;  
I care not for your plaudits on the grave—  
What good were they? my soul will not be there!  
And if men are to be what they have been,  
Though more exalted in that World Above—  
Let me, on earth, while living, have from men,  
What, being dead, will show one former love  
— But though within our mortal we can see  
Nothing which looks immortal to our sight;  
Behind that veil there is what makes us be,  
And without which we soon would be all night.  
And as man's natural body lies on earth,  
With earthly things—seen with our natural eyes—  
One spiritual bodies shall, when we go forth,  
Be seen by spiritual ones, where nothing dies.  
— Then we shall see all things, as they are seen  
On earth, with eyes no mortal sun can dim;  
And be in heaven, as we have ere been,  
Like many, though subject not to death like him.  
And if we earth, with us all we have  
Of knowledge here below, or happiness,  
The more we have of each, this side the grave,  
The richer will we be in heavenly bliss  
New York, April 1<sup>st</sup> 1841.

To Lessa-Mine.

By J. H. Chivers, M.D.

She is my life—Shelley.

The Rose is called the Queen of all the flowers,  
More radiant, but of odour less divine;  
The rich Magnolia, though it abounds the bowers  
Afar, is far less sweet than Lessa-Mine.  
— The Peach-tree blossom is of "tender smell"  
So is the scintilly Apple-bloom divine,  
But never Tuberoses, from Indian dell,  
Could be compared with thee, my Lessa-Mine!  
— There is not in the Paradise above,  
An Amaranth, or bud of Eglantine.

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- Not in the Eden-home of Perfect Love,  
A flower like thee, my gentle Jessamine!  
- The Lily is not half so sweet as thou,  
Nor is the Longwill's breath so sweet as thine,  
Nor is the Daffodill, which greets me now  
With its delicious speech, so sweet Jessamine!  
- For, as in heaven there no one star whose light  
Is brighter for than all the rest that shine;  
So, here on earth, there is one flower more bright  
Than all the rest - it is my Jessamine!  
Widdletown, Conn., Oct. 24<sup>th</sup> 1841.

- The Cottage Girl  
"She seemed a splendid Angel newly drest,  
Save wings, for heaven." - Keats.  
Her tender breasts were like two snowwhite doves  
Upon one willow bough at calm of even;  
Telling, each other, side by side, their loves,  
In diaphan tones as soft as heaven.  
And as the soft winds, from the flowery grove,  
Sway them thus sitting on that willow bough,  
At every breath - at every sigh of love -  
They undulate upon their bosom now.  
- Two dove-like spirits on her eyelids meet,  
And winked them gently, covering half her eyes,  
Whose soul in their own azure seemed to melt,  
And mingle, as the sunlight with the skies  
Her eyes were like two violets bathed in dew,  
In which each lash was mirrored dark within,  
As in some lake, reflecting Heaven so blue,  
The willow boughs long, languid limbs are seen.  
- No Gods celestial look is for too bright  
For Angels gaze in heaven, if not kept dim,  
And partly shorn of its excessive light,  
By the broad pinions of the Cherubim;  
So these two spirits, one on each fair lid,  
Let down the lash-fringed curtains to conceal,  
And keep about half that heavenly glory hid,  
Which it were death to mortal to reveal.  
In the Country, April 5<sup>th</sup> 1841. T. G. Chivers, M.D.





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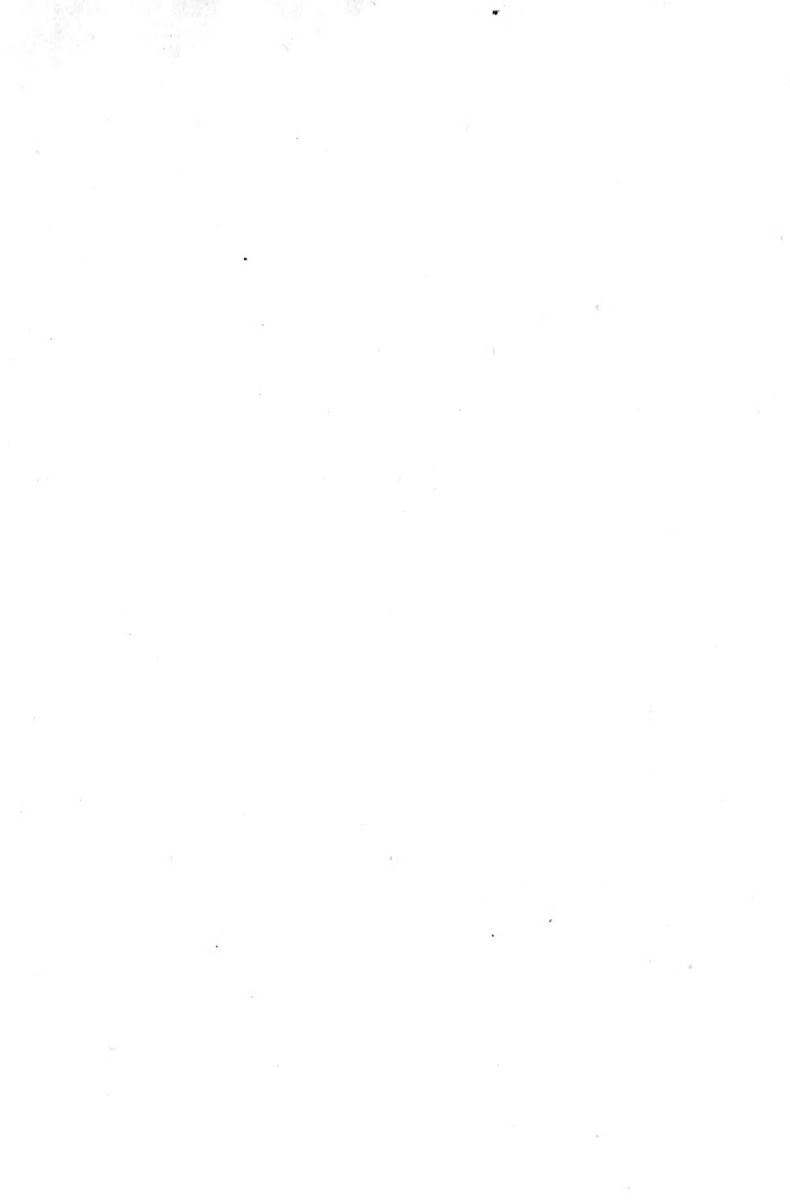
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